

# Hitchin Urban District Council.

## REPORT OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31ST DECEMBER, 1925.

TO THE CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE  
COUNCIL.

Gentlemen—

The Report this year is drawn up in accordance with the directions of the Ministry of Health to show an accurate condition of the Town as far as it affects the health of the inhabitants.

### GENERAL STATISTICS.

Area : 3675 acres.  
Population : 13380 (estimated).  
Number of inhabited houses (1921), 3526.  
Number of families or separate occupiers (1921)  
Rateable value : £69776.  
Sum represented by a penny rate : £239.

### PHYSICAL FEATURES AND GENERAL CONDITIONS.

Hitchin stands at an average height of about 220 feet above sea-level, surrounded by hills on the East, South and West and by flat country on the North. The sub-soil is mostly chalk and gravel with clay towards the North. A spur of the Chiltern Hills bounds the South East side of the Town.

There are three open commons, Walsworth on the East, Butts Close in the centre of the Town and Oughton Head Common on the North West. An open pasture of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  acres adjoining Queen Street was recently given to the Town. Hitchin is a market town for a considerable area around, and its population is made up of residential, professional, trade and industrial elements. The industries comprise fellmongering, iron works, jam and sweet factories, lavender production, railway depot, agricultural engineering and boiler making works, besides these, many workers are employed in the Letchworth factories.

### VITAL STATISTICS.

There were 225 births and 140 deaths, including 12 deaths of infants under 1 year of age. In a population of 13380 persons this gives the following rates as compared with the general rates :—

	Hitchin	England & Wales
Birth rate (per 1000 persons)..	16.8	18.3
Death rate (per 1000 persons)..	10.4	12.2
Infant Mortality (per 1000 born)	53.3	75

The birth rate is low but the general result is good and a great improvement on the statistics of 10 years ago. There was a time when it seemed improbable that we should ever get the infant mortality down to near 50, but no doubt here the child welfare work has helped greatly. There were no deaths of illegitimate children but there were 14 illegitimate births. In my opinion this reflects still on the difficult social conditions under which some of the people live.

There were 3 deaths from whooping cough, 7 from Influenza, 1 from Encephalitis Lethargica, 9 from pulmonary and 1 from non-pulmonary tuberculosis, 19 from other respiratory disease, 2 from infantile diarrhoea, 4 from pre-natal conditions, 2 from appendicitis, 11 from cerebral haemorrhage and 19 from heart diseases, 20 from malignant disease besides deaths from other causes. It will be seen from this that with improvement in sanitary conditions, it should still be possible to lower the death rate.

### INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

During the year 39 cases of scarlet fever, 2 of diphtheria and 1 of erysipelas were notified. There was a decline in diphtheria and an increase of scarlet fever. The scarlet fever cases came from all over the Town, and though there was an increase during the Autumn there was no actual epidemic. It is very probable that scarlet fever is conveyed by an infected throat, and this infection may be caught by a susceptible person from one who may be relatively unsusceptible. There is no known method of finding out these persons, so it is difficult to treat them except on the lines of isolation and disinfection, whenever they are suspected. Scarlet fever is increasing once more in virulence and may easily leave complications behind which have a crippling effect in after life. Some of the cases this year have given a considerable amount of trouble. Where it is impossible to isolate cases in the houses or where the patient is dangerously ill, the Council has arranged to send patients to the Hitchin Rural and Letchworth Urban Isolation Hospital. They are moved there by the Hospital's own motor ambulance. About half the cases have been removed to this Hospital.

The County Council have a Maternity Home, a Child Welfare Clinic, a School Clinic, an Eye Clinic and a scheme for operating on Tonsils and Adenoids at the voluntary hospital. There is also a Massage and Electricity Clinic under the Red Cross authorities. All these are doing good work and form a comprehensive health unit. A whole time health visitor under the County Nursing Association also does excellent work.

In Hitchin there is a part-time Medical Officer of Health, a whole-time Surveyor and a whole-time Sanitary Inspector under the Urban Council. The Sanitary Inspector was appointed this year

### SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE DISTRICT.

#### WATER SUPPLY.

A supply of good water, sufficient for ordinary circumstances, is obtained from a deep well in the chalk on the Council's freehold land at Charlton. This is on the South and surrounded by pasture land. A syphonic main brings the water to the pumping station in Queen Street, whence it is pumped up to the Water Tower on Windmill Hill. The height of this is 370 feet above sea-level. The average daily consumption is 270000 gallons.

#### RIVERS AND STREAMS.

Three streams—the Hiz—The Purwell and the Oughton, have their rise in the Southern side of the District. They all join near the Northern boundary into one stream, there is little pollution and the mud is cleared out periodically.

#### DRAINAGE.

There is a separate system of drainage, as the storm water is caught on the road surfaces and fronts of houses and in gullies, and directed by pipes to the river at various points. The sewage system is water-borne and directed by sewers of ample size to the sewage disposal works on the North East side of the district. The sewers are ventilated by six inch steel columns at sufficient points, and are systematically flushed.

## SEWAGE DISPOSAL.

There are two gravitation systems employed—a low level and a high level system. The low level sewage is purified by passing through detritus tanks, screening chamber, septic tank and coarse and fine contact beds. Storm water is received in another septic tank, which can be emptied on to the fine contact beds as required. The high-level sewage is dealt with in detritus tanks, screening chambers, and four open subsidence tanks, from which the effluent flows to four circular clinker filters, being distributed by Adams' revolving sprinklers. After passing through these it is again caught in a tank between the filters, from which it flows over an aerating wall into the effluent ditch. Here it joins the low level effluent, passes into the river Hiz, and empties itself into the river near Ickleford.

Ample tankage is provided for the storm overflow, which is drawn off on to filters as opportunity arises. The sludge from the different tanks is drawn off when necessary and filtered. The air-dried sludge is then collected and mixed with street refuse and solids from off the screens. There is a good demand for the manures from farmers and gardeners.

The tanks, filters, buildings, &c., occupy 8 acres, leaving 12 acres for farming purposes, and as no sewage matter is applied to this land the Surveyor is able to grow food such as early potatoes green stuffs, &c.

About  $1\frac{1}{2}$  acres are planted with willow trees.

## REFUSE DISPOSAL.

The house refuse is collected from every house weekly, and sanitary galvanised dust-bins are in general use. If house holders brought their receptacles to the front of the house at a stated time when they knew the collection was to be made, the cost might be considerably reduced. The refuse has been dumped into pits, but as the Town has grown, these pits have become a nuisance, and the Council is now providing a pulveriser to deal with the refuse.

## CLOSET ACCOMMODATION.

As will be seen in the Sanitary Inspector's report, a great deal has been done to provide flushing cisterns for the W.C's. in the town itself. At the village of Charlton the old privies have been abolished and a proper system of E.C's. which are regularly emptied by the Council, has been instituted.

## SCHOOL INSPECTIONS.

During the year 560 children were examined. This number increases year by year. The main defects were as follows:—

Unclean	...	...	...	...	...	47
Malnutrition	...	...	...	...	...	5
Bad Teeth	...	...	...	...	...	180
Enlarged Tonsils and Adenoids	...	...	...	...	...	254
Defective Eyesight	..	...	...	...	...	30
Other Defects	...	...	...	...	...	149
Un-Vaccinated	...	...	...	...	...	190

Through the kindness of the Child-Welfare Committee we are able to supply to suitable children at the Schools some cod-liver oil. Our new knowledge on the subject of food and the fact that many children suffer from chronic vitamin starvation teaches us, what we see practically, that the benefit to a growing child of small doses of cod-liver oil and of good fresh milk far out weighs the cost involved.

The Sanitary arrangements at the Schools are all water flushed.

## GENERAL CONDITION OF HOUSING.

There is much overcrowding still in the town. Many of the houses though small are quite possible for a small family but lodgers are often taken in, and sometimes these lodgers are married couples.

During the last five years two areas in the town, the S. Andrews St. area and Queen St. area have been condemned as insanitary areas after separate inquiries by the Ministry. The S. Andrews St. area is now demolished and it is significant that the workers on the demolition and others, have all said that they had no idea that conditions were so bad. If all the conditions of bad insanitary housing were practically realised by the Council there would be no argument about re-housing.

There are still a few more insanitary small areas which have been condemned such as Adam and Eve Alley, Ship Yard, Anchor Yard, Hall's Yard and the Yard adjacent to the Highlander. These have not yet been dealt with.

To deal with the re-housing, the Council has built 180 cottages, partly helped by a grant from the Ministry and partly by subsidy. It is proposed to follow this up with 203 cottages on the Westmill Lane Estate.

During 1925, 63 small freehold dwellings have been built by private builders mostly by aid of the subsidy.





# REPORT OF THE SANITARY INSPECTOR FOR THE YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31ST, 1925.

Gentlemen,

I beg to lay before your Committee a list showing the number and nature of nuisances and sanitary defects which have been dealt with during the year ending December 31st, 1925, together with other work carried out in connection with the sanitary administration of the district.

As abstract figures do not indicate the nature of the work involved I will take the opportunity of enlarging on a few items enumerated.

In the 217 nuisances dealt with the condition of soil drains found defective necessitated a total re-construction of the drainage of five houses, and partial re-construction of the drainage of four houses.

Owing to a large number of dust bins found defective or houses without a proper and sufficient refuse receptacle to comply with the Bye-laws, 262 dust bins have been provided.

The small number of inspections made and recorded under the Housing Inspection of District Regulations indicates that the Regulations have not been applied as it is intended, but in view of the fact that a large number of houses were without flushing cisterns for the water-closets, this condition, by a gradual process is now being altered, and 359 flushing cisterns have been provided. This necessitated the provision of 140 new W.C. pans, this work being carried out by owners of property, therefore, it is quite obvious that some further work would be involved on owners of such dwelling-houses which come under the Housing Acts which require the owners of dwelling-houses suitable for occupation by persons of the working classes to make, and keep the houses in all respects reasonably fit for human habitation, also, that the inspection, recording, issuing of Notices, &c., would involve a very large amount of time with regard to house-to-house inspections, and which would obviously leave no time for other classes of inspection work unless carried out by a separate officer.

Serious cases of housing defects coming to my knowledge have been dealt with summarily.

The administration of the Public Health (Meat) Regulations 1924, which came into operation on the 1st April, 1925, has been carried out satisfactorily during the past year with regard to giving notice of time of killing of animals, and this has generally been observed by occupiers of slaughterhouses without much difficulty.

The Regulations do not prescribe anything definite with regard to the protection of meat from contamination by flies, mud, filth, or other substance being splashed or blown thereon.

The result is that there is no uniformity in comparing one district with another. Some butchers shops always have glass window fronts to protect the meat, others do not use windows, there appears to be no recommendation by the Ministry of Health with regard to this point.

I remain,

Yours obediently,

THOMAS L. KEMP,

Sanitary Inspector.

## SUMMARY OF NUISANCES DEALT WITH.

Nuisances dealt with ... ..	217
Statutory Notices served for Nuisances ...	1
Informal Notices (including letters sent)...	280
Letters re Notices ... ..	62
Flushing Cisterns provided for existing W.C.'s. ... ..	359

New W.C. pans provided where found defective ... ..	140
Seats of W.C.'s. repaired or renewed ...	48
Choked W.C.'s. cleared ... ..	14
Defective re-constructed or repaired ...	12
New Inspection Chambers built ... ..	16
New trapped yard gullies fixed ... ..	28
Spouting and rain-water pipes renewed, or repaired ... ..	17
Floors renewed or repaired ... ..	5
New Dust Bins provided ... ..	262
Houses found dirty and cleansed ... ..	6
Pig styes inspected ... ..	12
Pig styes found insanitary ... ..	3
Pig styes re-constructed ... ..	1

## MILK AND DAIRIES ACTS.

There are five Registered Cowkeepers in the district and eight Registered Retail Dairies and Milkshops.

The Cowsheds are visited in order to see that the requirements of the Dairies, Cowshed, and Milkshops Orders are carried out.

The sheds have been found to be kept in a satisfactory manner, but there is room for improvement in the matter of construction generally. I cannot report any improvements in this connection, which would generally give more air-space per animal.

Considerable improvements have been found regarding the regular limewashing of the cowsheds and milkstores which are done twice at least in every year.

## SLAUGHTERHOUSES.

There are 10 slaughterhouses in the district of which seven are Registered, and three are licensed.

They are visited for the purpose of Meat inspection, and for seeing that the Regulations generally, and the Bye-laws are carried out.

These premises are well conducted and kept satisfactorily.

Under the PUBLIC HEALTH (MEAT) REGULATIONS 1924, 690 visits were made during the year, also shops and markets are frequently inspected.

Diseased meat is disposed of by burial at the Sewage Disposal Works, Grove Road. Lime is used for covering the diseased meat when buried.

## MEAT AND FOOD INSPECTION.

During the year the following have been destroyed as unfit for the food of man:—

Beef ... ..	173 stones (home killed).
Pork ... ..	157 stones (home killed).
Mutton ... ..	8 stones (home killed).
Pigs Heads... ..	35 (home killed).
Pigs Plucks.. ...	26 (home killed).
Beasts Livers ...	13 (home killed).
Beasts Lungs ...	10 sets (home killed).
Beasts Heads and Tongues ... ..	9 (home killed).

## FACTORY AND WORKSHOPS.

No. of Bakehouses ... ..	15
„ Factory Bakehouses... ..	7
„ Workshop Bakehouses ... ..	8
„ Inspections of Bakehouses ... ..	45
„ Notices for limewashing ... ..	36
„ cleansing of floors ... ..	5
Required improved ventilation of Bakehouses	2
Certified underground Bakehouses ... ..	—

## FACTORY, WORKSHOPS AND WORKPLACES.

Premises	Number of		
	Inspection.	Written Notices.	Occupiers prosecuted.
Factories (including Factory Laundries) ... ..	24	18	—
Workshops (including Workshop Laundries) ... ..	47	16	—
Workplaces (Other than Outworker's premises) ... ..	10	6	—
Total ... ..	81	40	—

Defects found in Factories, Workshops and Workplaces:—

Particulars.	Number of Defects.			
	Found.	Remedied	No of Refer-ences red to in respect factory to which inspec-tor, prosecu-tions were made.	
Want of cleanliness ... ..	31	31	—	—
Nuisances under the Public Health Acts—				
Want of Ventilation ... ..	2	2	—	—
Overcrowding ... ..	—	—	—	—
Want of drainage of floors ... ..	1	1	—	—
Other nuisances ... ..	5	5	—	—
Sanitary accommodation—				
Insufficient ... ..	—	—	—	—
Unsuitable or defective ... ..	1	1	—	—
Not separate for sexes ... ..	—	—	—	—
Offences under the Factory & Workshops Acts—				
Illegal occupation of underground bakehouses (S101) ... ..	—	—	—	—
Other offences ... ..	—	—	—	—
Total ... ..	40	40	—	—

## FACTORY AND WORKSHOPS ACTS.

So far as I can estimate there appears to be about 60 workshops and workplaces in the district which would come under the Factory and Workshops Acts, the whole of which await inspection and classification.

## ACTS ADOPTED.

Infectious Disease Notification Act, 1890.  
 Infectious Disease Prevention Act, 1890  
 Public Health Acts Amendment Act, 1890.  
 Public Health Acts Amendment Act, 1907.  
 Part 2. Part 3. Sections 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50 and 51.  
 Part 4. Sections 52 to 66.  
 Part 5. Sections 69 to 75.  
 Part 10. Sections 92, 93 and 95.

## BYE-LAWS AND REGULATIONS.

Bye-laws.—Dairies, Cowsheds and Milkshops, 1888. Slaughterhouses, 1885. Nuisances under the Public Health Acts, 1875. New Street and Buildings, 1914.

Public Health (Meat) Regulations, 1924.

## URINALS AND OTHER CONVENIENCES FOR LICENSED PREMISES.

Number of Inspections ... ..	72
Re-construction of urinals, and improvement of existing accommodation ... ..	8
Additional W.C. accommodation ... ..	2
Premises without urinal accommodation ... ..	1
Number of Licensed Premises ... ..	42

## HOUSING.

Number of new houses erected during the year—	
(a) Total (including numbers given separately under (b) ... ..	128
(b) With State assistance under the Housing Acts ... ..	62
(1) By the Local Authority ... ..	43
(2) By other bodies or persons ... ..	23

## I.—UNFIT DWELLING HOUSES.

(1) Total number of dwelling-houses inspected for housing defects (under the public Health or Housing Acts) ... ..	217
(2) Number of dwelling-houses which were inspected and recorded under the (Inspection of District) Regulations, 1910, or Housing Consolidated Regulations, 1925 ... ..	5
(3) Number of dwelling-houses found to be in a state so dangerous or injurious to health as to be unfit for human habitation. ... ..	—
(4) Number of dwelling-houses (exclusive of those referred to under the preceding sub-head) found not to be in all respects reasonably fit for human habitation ... ..	7

## II.—REMEDY OF DEFECTS WITHOUT SERVICE OF FORMAL NOTICE.

Number of defective dwelling-houses rendered fit in consequence of informal action by the Local Authority or their officers ... ..	7
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## III.—ACTION UNDER STATUTORY POWERS.

(a)—Proceedings under section 3 of the Housing Act, 1925.

(1) Number of dwelling-houses in respect of which notices were served requiring repairs ... ..	—
(2) Number of dwelling-houses which were rendered fit after service of formal notices ... ..	—
(a) By Owners ... ..	—
(b) By local authority in default of Owners ... ..	—
(3) Number of dwelling-houses in respect of which Closing Orders became operative in pursuance of declarations by owners of intention to close ... ..	—
(b)—Proceedings under Public Health Acts.	

(1) Number of dwelling-houses in respect of which notices were served requiring defects to be remedied ... ..	217
(2) Number of dwelling-houses in which defects were remedied after service of formal notice ... ..	—
(a) By Owners ... ..	—
(b) By local authority in default of owners ... ..	—
(c)—Proceedings under section 11, 14 and 15 of the Housing Acts, 1925.	

(1) Number of representations made with a view to the making of Closing Orders ... ..	—
(2) Number of dwelling-houses in respect of which Closing Orders were made ... ..	—
(3) Number of dwelling-houses in respect of which Closing Orders were determined, the dwelling-houses having been rendered fit ... ..	—
(4) Number of dwelling-houses in respect of which Demolition Orders were made ... ..	—
(5) Number of dwelling-houses demolished in pursuance of Demolition Orders ... ..	—